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Testimony of Kathleen Kasey of Injured Workers Unite Coalition, before the Labor and Public Employees Committee, February 24, 2011, in support of Senate Bill 986 AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EMPLOYER'S NOTICE TO DISPUTE CERTAIN CARE DEEMED REASONABLE FOR AN EMPLOYEE UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zaleski and esteemed members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Kathleen Kasey, I am an injured worker and a member of the Injured Workers Unite Coalition I reside in South Meriden, CT.

I am here to stress the importance of enacting SB 986.

As things stand now an Insurance Company is able to arbitrarily stop medical treatment, physical therapy, surgeries and medication without consequence. The only consequence ends up being on the injured worker who sorely needs the treatment that has been prescribed by his or her treating physician. In many cases the undue delays cause more and bigger problems for the injured worker and cause them to be unproductive for a longer length of time than if they were given prompt and proper medical treatment when the treating physician deems these procedures or medication necessary.

I ask you, is this any way to treat a worker who has been hurt on the job performing their duties for a company?

More often than not an injured worker is treated as a thorn in the side of the company for which they worked, rather than being treated with respect they are scorned upon as a liability and not the asset that they were for a company.

When treated in a timely manner and with respect and regard for their wellbeing they are able to get back to work much faster and once again become a productive member of society.

With things as they are treatment is often withheld for months, even years forcing the injured worker to end up on Social Security Disability or go on one of the Welfare Assistance Programs that are available, I can assure you that this is not something that any of us want. All we want is timely treatment so that we can get back to work, which gives us all a feeling of self worth.

The present system lets the insurance company do anything that they wish with little consequence putting a strain on the injured worker, his doctor's office (for too many of us have had to go to their doctor each month only to hear "there is nothing that can be done until your insurance company authorizes this surgery), How is something like this cost effective? Insurance companies end up paying medical mileage, doctor's visits, money that is spent needlessly when authorizing a surgery is what is really needed.....they prolong things which is NOT COST effective! Everyone would be better served with TIMELY treatment, causing less visits to the doctor, less medication, less medical mileage and a much better outcome for all of us.

This bill would help to stop such atrocities from continuing, it would make the insurance companies accountable for their actions and hopefully in the long run they would be sanctioned for these actions., something that is difficult to do at the present time.

The reason that this is such an important issue for me is I too have been treated in the manner that I have described.

Let me explain a bit, I am a fiber artist. I was an Educator for sewing machine companies for 10 years, who due to the economy lost her job. Since jobs such as that all but dried up with companies buying one another out I was forced to take a much lesser paying position. I didn't mind for at least I was working. The economic hit was hard enough to take but then I became injured on the job. This caused my income to go even lower and I almost lost my home because of being on Worker's Compensation. To add insult to injury the surgery that I needed was not authorized until one year after my injury! This delay caused me to have 5 other problems that would have never arisen had my treatment been done in a timely manner. All that aside I took it in stride as I had a job to go back to.....wrong! The company had a corporate policy that anyone who was on leave of absence for a year was terminated, it made no difference that they are the ones that caused this to happen with the delays imposed by their insurance company. So, where does that put me now? In an even more tenuous position I have been forced into being on Social Security Disability. Don't get me wrong I thank God that at least I get something per month to live on but I ask you this, how many of you on this committee would be able to sustain themselves in the state of Connecticut on \$884.00 a month? But at least I have something!

And just 2 weeks ago the insurance company cut off my medication, yet again, for NO REASON! I was made to wait 1 year before they Ok'd an endoscopy to see if the ulcers that I endured in my esophagus and stomach caused by the medication that was prescribed by the Worker's Comp Clinic that my company sent me to, were healed. I can go on and on, as most of us can but I think that you get the idea.

I testify here this afternoon not for myself, but for those who will come after me in the hopes that they will not be made to endure such blatant misuse of power by insurance companies. It is my hope that in testifying it will help the ones who come after me be treated with respect and get the timely treatment, they deserve so that they are able to regain employment and hence their lives.

I thank you for allowing me to give this testimony and for your attention this afternoon.....let's make this system work the way that it should.

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